

Goodbyes

by GreenWithAwesome

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Summary: Henri is caught in a fight with two other suitors, but Maxon cannot take anymore violence, and dismisses him from the Selection. But, to Eadlyn, this means the departure of someone she has truly fallen in love with. Erik. Oneshot. Eadrik. Headlyn friendship.

Goodbyes

I felt my heart descend through my stomach.

Henri was leaving.

And with Henri was... Erik.

The first fight that broke out (over that stupid asparagus) was something I could defend to Dad. He'd understood that all the Selected were wound up, tense, and jittery like wind chimes in a gale. I had managed to convince him not to send all of the involved home "just Burke. But, when this broke out... poor Henri was smashed in the face.

It was hard not to stare at his eye, swelling, a giant welt ballooning larger than his nose. And it was harder trying to comfort him, when Erik wasn't around to help translate. Gesturing did not get us very far, especially when he could only see through one eye.

It was too hard to convince Dad to let him stay. He'd jumped up in his chair, office papers flying, and swept his hand out.

"Get them out, Eadlyn!" he'd said. "Out of my home! I cannot tolerate these pathetic arguments putting you and everyone else in danger!"

Henri hadn't started it, of course. He'd just been there, and tried to stop it. But that meant being punched in the face, and looking

like a guilty instigator.

I'd pleaded. Begged. If Henri went, then Erik also left, too. I didn't want to let it happen. I enjoyed both of their companies in different ways. Henri, the most adorable friend any person could have.

And Erik...

My mind played a thousand different scenarios where he'd submitted his name into the Selection, won for his county, and flown over in a suit and tie instead of the rag-like cottons he wore most of the time, trailing behind Henri. A different scenario where I was allowed to get to know him, to fall in love with him...

What I felt now was so forbidden. What would the public say? I could see the papers now: _SCANDAL! PRINCESS EADLYN FALLS IN LOVE WITH A NON-SELECTED DURING HER SELECTION_. How I'd broken the necessary contract I gave to them, that I would marry one of thirty-five IllÃ©an sons.

How much more hated would I be than I am now, if the papers caught wind of the truth. The assortment of fruits and vegetables that would be thrown at the gates. The gossip, the hate-speeches, the protests and riots. The desire for my abdication, if it ever even reached that point. I couldn't bear it. I can hardly bare it now, when none of these things have come to fruition yet.

But, Erik...

He was soft breeze in a maelstrom, sweeping me to safety and dreams. He was fresh rain after sandstorms and blistering heat â€" the kind you want to sing and dance in, and kiss loved ones for whole minutes undisturbed. He was security and solitude, something I crave in my busy, crammed, stressful line of work. When all he did was comfort me, kiss my cheeks and hand, cuddle me until I dreamt of another life in another world.

With him, I think I could just manage that burden. Perhaps I would be the most scandalous, hated person in the history of IllÃ©a. But I knew, with Erik, I would be all right.

And now, along with Henri, he was leaving.

I ran down the hallway, tearing the tulle hem of my dress. It didn't matter â€" Neena could fix it later anyway. What Neena couldn't fix was a relationship that had ended before it had even begun. I veered a corner, near-missing a guard, and reached the doors to the side of the palace. The other exit, for the disgraced Selected who didn't deserve the honour of a proper dismissal.

Henri's luggage was stacked up into four haphazard piles by the door. Swendway stickers littered the leathery brown fabrics. He had his back turned, talking to the guard depositing his things into the car waiting outside, but I could see his fingers knitting together. Dad hadn't even let him say goodbye.

Erik wasn't there.

"Henri!" I called.

Henri turned, his blond curls dancing in air. I saw him weave another expression when realisation came to him, and he changed from something vacant and blank to a face of total shame. The swelling had died down, but still left an ugly brown concoction underneath the skin around his left eye. He wouldn't meet my eyes with his sole good one. He bowed as I neared, as if I hadn't become his friend over the past months. Bowing seemed so strange on Henri.

"Your Highness," he said. The distinct Swendway accent coloured his words. "I am sorry."

I wanted to explain that I'd tried to save him. But I didn't think Henri was articulate enough in English to understand.

He seemed to read my pained expression. Whatever I'd wanted to say, hopefully he understood anyway. He met my gaze, and it was hollow and empty. Then, he flickered to something behind him. A sound of footsteps.

I turned. Erik.

He was in his plainest clothes again. His hair was dishevelled and mopy, and like he hadn't taken a comb to it for days. His shoulders sunk into him, there was a darkness around his eyelids, and he dragged his feet, pausing only when he saw me. The briefest glint of hope passed his features for moments.

He approached, and drew a bow. My heart twisted, feeling grainy and withered. Like a dying flower in its last moments of life.

"Your Highness," he greeted quietly.

"Erik," I said. "Please don't say that like I'm an alien. I'm not. I'm... just Eadlyn. You know that."

Erik shook his head. I heard him gulp. "No, Your Highness. I am but a humble servant of your kingdom. Nothing more."

A black vine crawled up my lungs, stealing my breath. It was as if the small cheek kisses and hugs, hand-holds and stolen whispers were nothing but figments of my imagination. Like he'd swept it all away and locked it with a key, never again to be accessed.

He moved to step around me, but I quickly grabbed his hand. A warmth pulsed through me, so familiar and soft in mine. Tickles of ecstasy ran through my skin. "Please, Erik. I-I tried. I tried to defend Henri, but—" "

Erik snatched his hand away so fast, and the cold whooshed in. "Your Highness," he insisted, though there was pain in there. "Please, don't make this any harder," he said softer now. "I have to leave."

A numbness enveloped my fingers where he had held them, just for a second. There was a look in his eyes so aching, so hurt at his untimely departure with Henri that tore a heavy, unrepairable gash through me, as if tearing through corset fabric. Dad would never let me even so much as glance at Erik after he was gone, if he was associated with the 'disgraced' Henri. And, though I'd considered it,

I couldn't pull an Ahren and run off â€" someone would find me and bring me home. Erik wouldn't want that for me, anyway.

I could not contact him. I could not see him.

I would never see him again.

Tears began to prick my eyelids. Smears of eyeliner thickened in my peripheral vision. "Please, Erik," I whispered. "Please... there must be a way..."

He gazed at me. I felt my heart melt into a puddle of happiness and sadness at once. There was something beautiful in the way he looked at me â€" with tenderness, and pride. But there was a morose tone, a gossamer veil that indicated the end that this was.

"There isn't, Eadlyn," he whispered. "I'm sorry."

"Excuse me, Your Highness."

The guard's voice was gruff, and it sliced apart my concentration.

I swiped the tears from my cheeks and turned to him. Henri's belongings were gone, packed into the car revved and ready to leave outside.

"What?" I snapped, with more bitterness than I intended.

The guard shuffled. "Their car is ready to depart. They must leave now. His Royal Majesty's order."

Henri probably didn't understand what the guard had said, but he sure did understand the feeling. He gave a sad smile, plucked my clenching hand from my dress, and lightly kissed the back.

"Thank you," he whispered. A sadness had wept through his voice, and it nearly cracked. "_Kiitos, rakkaani_."

I loved Henri just as much as I loved Erik, but in the way a friend loves another friend. And Henri would always be one of my most cherished friends. I watched him turn, and stride down the steps, and into the car.

Erik traipsed passed me, hoping to leave without saying goodbye.

"_Eikko_," I susurrated, scared as I felt. "I... _I love you_."

Erik stopped, but did not turn around. In the smallest of voices, over the coarseness of the engine, the signs of life in the rest of the palace, over the harsh breeze of the wind and the scuffles of noise behind me, I heard him speak.

"_I love you too, Eadlyn_."

And then he was gone.

Fin.

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****Wow, this turned super angsty. Sorry!****

****Inspired by itsallabout-eadrik's That Night fanfiction on tumblr!
Thanks for such a wonderful, feelz-inducing piece! And dedicated to
all the Selectioners on tumblr, because this is our last round and
we're gonna' go out with a bang!****

****Thanks for reading, favouriting, following and reviewing! All
immensely appreciated! Hope you have a great day!****

****~ GWA****

End
file.